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ABSTRACT

This unit focuses on differing attitudes toward the environment and the philosophies from which those attitudes developed. After finishing this unit, students will: (1) gain an understanding of the concept of "world view"; (2) trace the historical events that created the Western world view; (3) explain the relationship between world view and the environment; and (4) analyze the Asian philosophies of Taoism and Buddhism as they relate to the environment. The various philosophies have positive perspectives to offer and the students should have the opportunity to discover those points for themselves. A conclusion to the unit could be done effectively by leading students to examine the best points from each with a pro/con chart on the blackboard or overhead using student reactions to create the atmosphere for a lively and positive discussion. An additional evaluation could be assigning a reaction paper with students writing about an attitude or behavior of theirs that reflects the influence of a world view and trying to imagine how this attitude or behavior would be altered if they lived elsewhere in the world. (EH)

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ED 392 704

Title: "East Meets West- Two Different Approaches to Progress and the Use of the Earth's Resourses"

Author: Burnell Peterson

Grade Level: High School 10-12

Subject: Environmental Studies, Geography, World History, Philosophy

Time Required: three class periods

Instructional Objectives:
Students will:

1. gain an understanding of the concept of "world view".

2. trace the historical events that created the Western world view.

3. explain the relationship between world view and the environment

4. analyze the Asian philosophies of Taoism and Buddhism as they relate to the environment.

Materials:

1. Handout "Western World View"

2. Handout "Eastern World View"

Procedures:

1. Identify any current event that is related to the destruction of the environment, abuse of natural resources, wars of competition for natural resources, pollution, the greenhouse effect, ozone depletion, etc. This lesson introduction can be accomplished by assigning magazine or newspaper searches, soliciting student's suggestions on blackboard or overhead, or teacher generated list of examples from teacher knowledge and experience

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2. Ask the central questions

1. "How or Why did we come to this current situation and potential crisis?"

2. "Are there other ways to think about the environment and the limited resources on the planet?"

3. Distribute and assign the reading of the handout "Western World View" after the lesson introduction.

4. Use the following questions in class discussion:

1. Define the term "world view".

2. Discuss the philosophy of the ancient Greeks as they related to world view and progress.

3. Trace the events that precipitated the radical changes and reversal of ancient phiolosphy to that of today's industrial countries.

4. Examine the events and connections that made current thinking on progress possible.

5. Distribute and assign the reading of the handout "Eastern World View" after the discussion on western world view.

6. Use the following questions in class discussion:

1. Discuss the Taoist and Buddhist view on work, progress, and the use of natural resources.

2. Examine the methods used by Buddhist monks at Hainsa temple in S. Korea to defend their philosophy on the destruction of their local environment.

3. Examine how a traditional house compliments the natural envronment.

7. Conclusions/ Evaluations: A teacher who uses this lesson should point out that both philosophies have positive perspectives to offer and the students should have the opportunity to seek out those points for themselves. I suggest that a conclusion to this lesson could be done effectively by leading students to choose the best points from each. This can be accomplished by constructing a pros/cons chart on the blackboard or overhead and soliciting student reactions. This could create the atmosphere for a lively and positive discussion. An additional evaluation could be accomplished by assigning a reaction paper in which the students would write about an attitude or behavior of theirs that reflects the

influence of a world view. In this paper they should try to imagine how this attitude or behavior would be altered if they lived somewhere else in the world. Introductory and concluding paragraphs should be included.

8. Sources:

1.Rifkin, Jeremy "Entropy, Into the Greenhouse World" Bantam, 1989

2.Schumacher, E.F. "Small Is Beutiful" Harper and Row, 1972

Handout Number One: "The Western World View"

On a spring day in 1750 Jacques Turgot, a French history teacher, walked into his classroom in Paris and delivered a lecture on past and future "world views". His lectures were to have a profound impact on the hopes and dreams of every man, woman, and child on this planet. . The industrial revolution that followed his remarks made his forecast possible and set in motion a series of events that have connected the past to the present and led humanity to its present use and abuse of the Earth's natural resources and the destruction of its environment.

In order to understand Turgot's remarks and follow the connections that led us to the present one, must ask and answer the following questions: What is "World View", what were the world views of past civilizations, what did Turgot propose world view should be, and how could a history teacher's lecture possibly affect his students lives, much less those of everyone who was yet to be born!

Humans have always had the desire to explain the how and why of life and existence. The frame of reference that a people construct become part of their culture and can be called their philosophy or world view. This aspect of culture is invisible and we are for the most part unconsious of how it affects the way we do things on a daily basis. Most of us live our lives without really thinking about why we do things the way that we do.

The Greeks believed that the Gods created a perfect world, but that it was humankind's responsibility to keep it that way. The world had within it the seeds of decay locked in a box and we were all safe as long as no one opened it. Well, Pandora did, and the seeds got out. Plato and Aristotle told their students that those seeds would sprout if any attempt was made to alter the perfect world that had been created. Progress and change therefore were not only undesirable, but had the potential to produce decay, chaos, and the destruction of everything good within the society. The Greek world view became a cycle that started with a "golden age" that was corrupted and destroyed by change and progress. After choas things can only get better so the golden age would return again. The Greek parent's goal was to give their kids a world that was exactly like the one they had gotten from their parents. So when someone in Platos day asked you "What's new" your best response would be "Nothing". Pretty boring by our standards!

This cyclical world view lasted for a long time but by the Middle Ages had been replaced by a world view that can best be described as a straight line. Europeans, to become known as people of the West or Westerners, followed the teaching of Christ and believed that history has a beginning (creation), middle (the present), and distinct end (the Last Judgement). After the Last Jugement there will be no more history. Time ends and eternity begins. People who followed this linear world view had no desire to have progress or change. Their goal was simply to follow God's law, die, and be with Him in eternity after the Last Judgement. People in the Middle Ages would be pretty hard to talk to because questions that we take for granted like, "What do you want to do after graduation" or "What do you need to be happy" would only create a blank expression on their faces. They wern't stupid; they just didn't think the way we think.

And what of Jacque Turgot, the French history teacher? How could a history teacher have any effect on anyone? He studied the march of time and its effect on all the people who had lived and died during the eons that had preceeded him. Ancient civilizations lived and died too, and as they did, a pattern began to emerge. Many civilizations bogged down and ended in fire and chaos, but the pattern that emerged showed steady progress over the centuries. And so progress became the key word in the minds of the great thinkers, and the West evolved the world view that you and I have inherited.

Turgot's lectures were followed by a number of philosophers and scientists who lived and worked independently of one another, but who succeeded in adding to the world view in which each new generation added to the overall advancement and progress for mankind. The machine age and the industrial revolution of England are an interesting study of how tiny historical threads woven together over time create the tapestry of life we know today. Some of the threads appear to be rather thin, but consider them an entertaining walk through the last three hundred years of western history.

The Industrial Revolution begins with the story of agriculture. In the1700's English agriculture had reached its pinnacle of productive capacity for the times. That was about to change! Consider the following progression of events. The recently colonized lands in the New World made it possible for young Englishmen with determination to thrive on the

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export markets of sugar (West Indies) or tobacco (America). Many of these men wished to make their fortune and return to England with enough money to purchase land and farm in their home country. At this same time genetic engineering or breeding was becoming possible and these men saw an opportunity to turn mediocre yields into high yields. Animal husbandry, seed drills, and crop rotation allowed them to further increase the yields of their landholdings.

More food meant more people. This translated in the following way: The social rule of the times was for one to get married and have children when it was financially possible to do so. Increased agricultural yields also increased the money one had and thereby made it possible to marry at a younger age. Of course, this meant more time in bed with your mate and consequently, more children. Unfortunately, England was already at the pinnacle of population density that made it impossible for everyone to have land, so these "extra" people became accessible to someone, anyone, who could find the means to employ them.

Enter the industrial connection. In 1709 a new technology in iron making appeared in England. The combination of limestone, iron ore, and coal (instead of charcoal) made it possible to produce iron in large quantities. England had used up most of its oak trees, its source of charcoal, but had a large quantity of coal in deep seams under the earth. Until then deep mining had not been possible for two reasons. The population was too busy producing food and the deep mines had a problem with groundwater seepage. A previously invented toy called the steam engine and the increased population made it possible to pump water out of deep shaft mines and make large scale mining a reality. Railroads, powered by steam and built on tracks of iron, were used to transport the coal to the city where textile mill owners had discovered that the steam power could also be used to replace waterpower. Henceforth, cities could be built anywhere and the economic race was on.

But what will the factory do with all the stuff it can produce? Adam Smith, an economist, wrote a book in 1796 called the "Wealth of Nations" and provided part of the answer to the question. Countries had to be able to trade freely and markets needed to be established to keep up with the supply that came out of the busy factories. Free enterprise and business competition was coupled to the Imperial British Empire and a beautiful marriage was consumated. Or so they thought. The British

Empire organized their colonies to provide the natural resources needed by the businessmen in their factories. These capitalists provided jobs for millions of loyal British subjects who provided the labor to make more finished goods than England could possibly use. Many more millions of British subjects in the colonies became the markets for the goods and the Royal treasury filled to the brim.

The merchants grew weathy and their workers prospered, too. The French teacher's world view fit quite nicely into the scheme because growth and prosperity were hallmarks of his world view and were essential to the success of good business. Colonies and Empire building caused wars in Europe, but even so, most of the world has seen unprecedented growth over the last three hundred years.

And so we live in a world that anticipates profit and growth at the end of every year. Each generation is supposed to have more and nicer things than the preceeding generation. We've learned that last years model isn't good enough and that success means having more than our parents did. But each generation is also using up more of the natural resources than the preceeding one. Human population grows while the size of the natural environment declines. Pollution increases while nonrenewable resources decrease.

Did it have to be that way? Most of us cannot imagine any other world than the one in which we live. We think, act, and feel the way we do because the tiny threads of history have been woven together to form the fabric in which we live. It is ironic that only now, as the fabric begins to fray and undwind, do we study the historical events that make us who we are.

Handout # 2 "Eastern World View"

The road to Hainsa temple was an ascending track that followed a stream in South Korea. The earthy smells of lush vegetation were particularly pungeant on this warm humid day during the summer monsoon. The mountain air was thick and heavy with moisture but void of the grit from the valleys of the cities far below. Large healthy trees formed a canopy of protective shade from the heat of the mid afternoon sun and sheltered the birds that produced the only sounds on this quiet and peaceful mountainside. As I approached the temple grounds I began to notice long white banners written in Han'gul, the language of the Korean people. Buddhist monks from the temple sat at a table with paper and pen while tourists like myself sought our passports for identification. The petition drive was part of an effort by the monks to maintain their mountain environment in its pure and pristine state. A developer wanted to cut down the trees and build a golf course. Increased traffic, more people, and urban development were sure to follow and threaten the continued existence of this beautiful place.

The world view of the West with its emphasis on growth, development, and prosperity seems to be a part of the culture or way of life for people everywhere. And although most of the world seems to embrace the Western philosophy today, many people have questions about the wisdom of a way of life that believes it can grow and expand year by year, generation by generation. A study of Eastern world views indicates an interesting contrast to a way of thinking that most Westerners take for granted.

It might be helpful to note that this idea of "East and West" did not occur to anyone until Marco Polo and other merchants from Europe began to explore their world at the end of the Middle Age. They had heard about China, India, and Japan during the Crusades and had come to conclude that those places had immeasurable wealth that could be exploited through trade and commerce. And since they thought of themselves as being at the center of the world, then people in Asia had to be somewhere else! The sun rose in the east, the direction in which Asia could be found, and so Asians became the "people of the East".

As descendents of Europeans, or followers of their world view, we westerners would find the beliefs or culture of the monks at Hainsa temple beyond our understanding. Briefly stated the Buddhist monks believe that pain and suffering are a permanent part of life unless one follows a series of steps on a staircase that leads to Nirvana, a place of eternal peace. One of the steps is called "Right Livelihood" This step on the ladder of the Buddhists world view could also be called "Buddhist economics" or "How to efficiently utilize your resources and make a living". The following are some examples of how the Hainsa monks would view work, materialism, and the utilization of our natural resources:

"The function of work is threefold: it gives a person a chance to utilize and develop his character, enables that person to overcome pride by joining with other people in a common task, and brings forth the goods and services needed for one's existence."

"The essence of civilization is not in the possession of wants and material things, but in the purification of human character. Character is developed through ones work or contribution to the community."

In the western world view we measure a person's success through a device called the "standard of living" or one's annual consumption. In short, one who buys and consumes is "better off" than one who buys and consumes little. The Buddist world view would consider this measure of wealth to be highly illogical because they see consumption as a means to physical wellness and maximum wellness is achieved through minimum consumption. This Eastern world view believes in a modest consumption of natural resources and a country that follows this philosophy is less likely to be at its neighbor's throat seeking oil and iron for its own consumption. Local needs should be met through local resources. Non-renewable resources like oil and coal should be used only when no alternative exists because to rape the earth is an act of viloence. Renewable fuels such as wood and water are preferred, but ideally the tree is already dead or the dam will not disrupt and destroy any life.

The cultures of the "people of the east" have flourished for thousands of years. The Europeans of Marco Polo's day lived in squalor whereas the Asians of the far east lived their lives in an environment that had seen consistent advances during the previous four millennium. The eastern world view saw people and nature as one and inseparable. Nature therefore was a force to be lived with harmoniously rather then a force to be conquered. This philosophy could be seen in every aspect of life. The houses, for example, were constructed of earth materials; walls of wooden poles cemented together by mud and straw, roof of rice straw thatch. The house was constructed above the earth and heated from below. Charcoal placed under the house warmed the floor, thereby warming the entire structure with a consistant radiant heat throughout. Hinged or removable doors and windows allowed adequate ventilation. A courtyard within the perimeter of the structure enabled the owner to enjoy a small garden of flowers and shrubs within the privacy of his home. Even the house shape reflected the natural environment as it mirrored the shape of the mountainous terrain beyound.

The East met the West with the arrival of Marco Polo and the thousands of merchants and businessmen who followed. Trade and commerce floursh over the next five hundred years and today one might think the cities and countries of the East have wholly adopted the western way of life. There is, however, a growing consensus in Asia that the ancient traditional world view should play a greater role, and that the ancient ways still make sense in a modern world. The monks at Hainsa temple think so and have adopted the nonviolent techniques of Ghandhi and Martin Luther King to demonstrate their resistance to the encroachment of development in their community. The Eastern philosophy on develoomen may not be wholly acceptable to the culture of the West, but certainly has ideals worth considering on a planet of diminishing resources.

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